United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in unanimous resolution, sets out security and safety requirements for establishment of United Nations operations; host countries must take appropriate measures and conclude status-of-operation agreements.

+ Paraguay, Latvia, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Canada, Slovenia, Germany, China, and France among speakers in General Assembly's general debate today.

+ Romania, Argentina, Denmark, Guinea, Poland, Sierra Leone, Honduras and Angola among speakers in general debate yesterday.

+ Secretary-General and President of Eritrea to sign agreement tomorrow on establishment of United Nations Integrated Office in Asmara.

+ Epidemic of optic neuritis which struck 50,000 people in Cuba earlier this year no longer spreading according to WHO; about 1,500 reported to have suffered severe loss of vision.

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The Security Council today said that when considering the establishment of future United Nations operations, it would require, inter alia, that the host country take all appropriate steps to ensure the security and safety of the operation and its personnel; that related arrangements undertaken by the host country extend to all persons engaged in the operation; and that an agreement on the status of the operation and all its personnel in the host country be negotiated quickly and should come into force as near as possible to the outset of the operation.

The Council took that action by adopting unanimously resolution 868 (1993), in which it welcomed the Secretary-General's report of 27 August on the security of United Nations operations. The Council asked the Secretary-General to take into account the provisions of the resolution when recommending the establishment or renewal of a United Nations operation. It

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also encouraged him to take forward those measures proposed in his report which fell within his responsibilites to ensure that security matters were an integral part of the planning for an operation.

The Council urged States and parties to a conflict to cooperate closely with the Organization to ensure the security and safety of United Nations forces and personnel. The Council said attacks and the use of force against persons engaged in a United Nations operation authorized by it would be considered interference with the exercise of the Council's responsibilites and might require it to consider appropriate measures. If the host country was unable or unwilling to meet its security and safety obligations, the Council said it would consider what appropriate steps should be taken.

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President Juan Carlos Wasmosy of Paraguay today told the General Assembly that his country had carried out extraordinary reforms in the political and social systems without external assistance. The Government aimed to use stability and security to ensure that those who were working could enjoy the fruits of their labour. Democracy and equality were the only paths to justice and harmony. The people of Paraguay had made considerable sacrifices to achieve democracy, he said, adding that rapid population growth and a shortage of resources had been the main obstacles to success.

The President called on United Nations agencies and international financial institutions to redouble their efforts to aid developing countries, to control costs and to improve efficiency. He said that the stability of democratic countries depended on the integrity of Governments and officials, and stressed that the Government of Paraguay intended to punish any kind of corruption. He also underlined the importance of free trade and the expansion of markets worldwide, and expressed the hope that the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks would be completed successfully.

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Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis today told the General Assembly that the reestablishment of Latvia's independence and the restoration of its Constitution in 1991 were testimony to the power of democracy, human endurance and the supremacy of international law. He stressed that Latvia was not a newly independent State; while it had lost its sovereignty and independence de facto between 1918 and 1991, its status as a State had continued de jure.

President Ulmanis said that the most urgent matter confronting Latvia was the continued illegal presence in the country of the military forces of the former Soviet Union, now under the control of the Russian Federation. For more than two years, Latvia had sought the removal of those forces through bilateral negotiations and with the assistance of the international community. The General Assembly had called on the Baltic States and the Russian Federation to conclude withdrawal agreements without delay. Latvia wanted an assurance that its sovereignty, independence and territorial

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integrity would be respected and that a threat to international peace and security would not arise from its territory. Mr. Ulmanis expressed the hope that negotiations with the Russian Federation, which had begun yesterday, would soon lead to a withdrawal agreement.

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The President of Nicaragua, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, told the General Assembly today that her country had been a symbol of war and of hope in this decade. Only with international assistance could it continue to be a symbol of hope. Since 1990, when the Assembly called on the international community to offer Nicaragua "effective and efficient" support, her country had fulfilled all agreements and commitments with that community and with multilateral institutions. Now, she said, it needed additional resources to activate its production and economic growth, to strengthen social networks and to reactivate conciliation.

Mrs. Chamorro said she believed that countries in transition from war to peace, which had signed international agreements to attain total pacification, democracy and reconstruction, should have access to a special fund, to enable them to "stand again and go forward". Without exceptional support they could not compete with nations that had not suffered the political, economic and social destruction resulting from war. The appeal for help, she stressed, was made with the conviction that her Government held the primary responsibility for preventing democracy from regressing.

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The President of Bolivia, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, warned today that under present circumstances man had to destroy nature and the environment to survive. Addressing the General Assembly, he said that the end of the cold war had not translated into an increase in international cooperation and solidarity. At least during the era of confrontation, there was greater cooperation in self-defence against the communist danger. Now poor countries were faced with the curtailment of assistance while the prices of their raw materials were plummeting and protectionist barriers in the industrialized markets were rising higher.

Population growth, the destruction of the environment, production of illegal drugs, urban migration -- all were problems afflicting the poor countries, but their effects were felt throughout the world, he said. Those problems could only be resolved through greater economic and social development. Bolivia would have to prepare for a period of sustainable development in order to improve the living conditions of its people, especially in the rural sector. Economic growth could significantly reduce the role of coca production, opening up possibilities for its gradual elimination. Bolivia, he stated, was committed to completely halting drug production and trafficking.

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Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell told the General Assembly this afternoon that a panel of civilian and military experts should be charged with assessing proposals on the enhancement of the Organization's peace-keeping capacity. Canada, having participated in virtually every United Nations military operation, had a number of proposals in that regard. She suggested, among other things, that a permament strategic headquarters staff capable of controlling two or more large-scale, multi-dimensional operations be established, and that Member States commit themselves to provide troops on a stand-by basis, as Canada had done in the past year, to improve the Organization's ability to rapidly deploy forces to emerging flashpoints.

United Nations Members had to develop the large cadres of peace-keepers necessary for future missions, she stressed. Training was the key to integrating different national contingents, particularly for a corps of senior officers who would have to exercise leadership in complex, difficult and dangerous situations. To ensure that field operations met high standards, a common code of conduct should be concluded soon, she said. It was also necessary to come to grips with the increasingly serious dangers facing peace-keepers.

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Janez Drnovsek, Prime Minister of Slovenia, today told the General Assembly that when countries with totalitarian regimes and no democratic movements had been confronted with the end of the bipolar world, the resulting ideological vacuum had led to nationalism, expansionism and violations of human rights. Such changes had tested the principles of international cooperation, and the United Nations had to adapt to the new challenges. He identified a need for further evolution in the field of international law, given that international interdependence was reducing the scope of matters essentially within the state's domestic jurisdiction, while the scope of legitimate international action was expanding. That process provided an opportunity for further protection of human and minority rights and of the environment.

In the last two years, Slovenia had unilaterally restricted its own military potential, the Prime Minister continued. However, it remained subject to the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council on the former Yugoslavia. Instead of producing the desired effect, the embargo had prevented the victims of aggression from defending themselves. It was time for the Council to reconsider the embargo and adjust it to realities. He went on to say that 70,000 refugees were living in Slovenia, and called attention to a decline in international aid for them.

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The Foreign Minister of Germany, Klaus Kinkel, today stated that his country was prepared to assume responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council. He told the General Assembly that the most important decisions on security and peace were today made in the Council and that anyone who wanted peace had to strengthen the Council. However, it would only be

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possible to maintain and strengthen the Council's credibility if deliberations on its reform took into account the growing importance of the Third World.

A culture of peace was a prerequisite for lasting peace, he said. Not only governments but individual citizens had to develop the will for peace if they were to overcome racial hatred and religious conflict. The Europeans, he continued, lived nextdoor to and in close contact with Islam. Mutual bridges of understanding were needed, not new "enemy-images". It was necessary to promote education for peace, and therefore the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with its mandate to foster relations between nations, deserved comprehensive support. Germany, he stated, advocated the strengthening of all United Nations bodies -- not never-ending discussions on reform but greater efficiency.

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Qian Qichen, Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, told the General Assembly today that his country desired a new international political and economic order of peace, stability, justice and rationality based on the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and on the recognition of diversity and the differences between States. In that new order, mutual respect and cooperation would replace hegemonism and power politics; peace talks would replace the use or threat of force; and equality and accomodation would replace trade protectionism and unequal exchanges. He called on developed countries to curb protectionism, provide more funds for development and environmental protection and cut the debt burdens of developing countries.

China had always supported a total nuclear test ban within the framework of the complete prohibition and destruction of nuclear weapons, Mr. Qian went on to say. China exercised great restraint in nuclear testing and had carried out fewer tests than other nuclear powers. He rejected allegations that China's economic success would entail a military build-up, or that China would "move around filling up the vacuum". China's burgeoning economy contributed to the economic well-being of Asia and the world at large, and it would never engage in aggression or expansionism, he stressed.

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French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe told the General Assembly today that France's foreign policy was based on a desire for independence and a commitment to its strategic, commercial and cultural interests. While it was open to negotiation, France would not give up any essential element of its security, prosperity or soul. His country wanted a strong, prosperous, democratic and generous Europe. European unity was the only way to avert the dangers of implacable nationalist sentiment and economic disparities. France had spared no effort to end the war in the former Yugoslavia and had made the largest contribution to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR). To prevent the recurrence of such a war, it had submitted a pact on European stability to its European partners, to which it would like to associate the Russian Federation, Canada and the United States.

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The Foreign Minister said the United Nations must be strengthened. The Security Council might be enlarged with new permanent members and additional non-permanent members, while preserving its efficiency. The Secretary-General should have the means to carry out his tasks, with a stronger peace-keeping department, an inspection mechanism and a court for budgetary discipline. The Organization's finances should be reorganized, with penalties for late payment of dues. The Organization needed an expanded capacity to respond to threats to peace, but should not have its own military force, he added.

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Teodor Viorel Melescanu, Foreign Minister of Romania, told the General Assembly yesterday that his country had learned that democracy, the rule of law, the market economy and fundamental freedoms were essential for the fulfilment of human aspirations. It had also learned that the process of transition would take longer than expected. He cited the decreased cooperation with neighbouring countries and the negative effects on his country's economy of the United Nations embargo against Iraq, Libya and the former Yugoslavia, which Romania observed. Despite the undeniable difficulties, he said, "there is no way back".

Romania was determined to contribute to United Nations peace-keeping activities to as far as possible, he continued. The support and cooperation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) were both welcome in the effort to enhance those activities. He suggested that the United Nations define the legal content of the duty of solidarity, which should become one of the key strategic values of the new world order. The best way to turn hope to reality was to work together in a vital, growing solidarity aimed at what could be accomplished tomorrow.

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Guido di Tella, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, speaking in the general debate yesterday, warned that there was a concrete risk that the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations would fail because some Governments insisted on protectionist policies that were anachronistic and adversely affected the trade possibilities of countries such as Argentina. However, despite those problems, there was cause for hope, he said.

The strengthening of a climate of harmony in Latin America would require new ideas for the development of a structure of regional security adapted to the present times, based on cooperation, balance and transparency, he said. Cooperative security was a realistic and feasible proposal for Latin America and countries in the region should give it special consideration, in accordance with the ideas of the Secretary-General on the role of regional organizations in his "An Agenda for Peace". He reaffirmed Argentina's rights to the Malvinas Islands and to the South Georgias and South Sandwich Islands. The peaceful and negotiated recovery of the islands was a central and permanent issue of his country's foreign policy, he said.

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Niels Helveg Petersen, the Foreign Minister of Denmark, yesterday told the General Assembly that the peoples of the world looked more and more to the United Nations to solve their conflicts and to bring them political stability and economic prosperity. The Organization was also expected to play a leading role in securing democracy and respect for human rights, including women's and children's rights, to bring relief to refugees and displaced persons and to prevent the spread of means of mass destruction.

Stating that reform of the United Nations was necessary to meet those challenges, he outlined various items for consideration. These included the need to make the composition of the Security Council more representative of current realities and the importance of strengthening the Organization in the area of peace-keeping, peacemaking and preventive diplomacy. The Assembly should establish the post of high commissioner for human rights, as recommended by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, while the United Nations must respond effectively to the economic and social needs of developing countries. He stressed that the World Social Summit, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, was an opportunity to put people at the centre of development.

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Ibrahima Sylla, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea, said yesterday that it was paradoxical that the international community was being asked to resolve international conflicts while simultaneously being denied the resources with which to carry out that task. In a statement to the General Assembly, he went on to say that in the developing world today the necessary capital for economic growth was nowhere to be found. In Africa that problem had been complicated by drought, desertification, stagnation in development aid, deteriorating terms of trade, reduced export earnings, structural adjustment and external debt.

However, he continued, Africa had seen the progressive democratization of its society and institutions. Guinea had ratified the majority of African and international conventions on human rights and had adopted laws calling for presidential government; the separation of powers; the primacy of law; political pluralism and decentralization. He said a Supreme Court had been established and a National Media Council had been formed to guarantee freedom of expression and access by all political parties to State media.

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Speaking in the general debate yesterday, Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski said that in an increasingly interdependent world, the United Nations offered the best avenue to address current and future global problems and to face the task of creating a better, more democratic and just world. Such an approach must be based on the assumption that the world had become pluralistic, whatever the "size and weight" of the States.

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The Foreign Minister said there was an increased awareness of the need for multilateral approaches in solving problems. The primary source of crises now lay in unresolved economic and social issues and in such political problems as territorial disputes and ethnic tensions. Efforts should also be undertaken to promote human rights on a regional level. He suggested that a small bureau, possibly located in Warsaw, could be entrusted with monitoring human rights observance in Eastern Europe. Citing the increasing violations of humanitarian law in armed conflicts, he called for urgent action to revive the observance of humanitarian law and to uphold the authority of the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols.

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Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo, Sierra Leone's Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said yesterday in the General Assembly that the civil war in Liberia continued to take the lives of many innocent Sierra Leoneans. Some 400,000 had been internally displaced, and 250,000 others had had to seek refugee status in neighbouring countries, while the national economy had been devastated. Without peace in Liberia, Sierra Leoneans could not embark on the economic reconstruction of their country. He said that his Government had expected that by now there would have been both a rapid establishment and deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL).

Peace-keeping, he continued, was not a panacea for political problems. Therefore, a comprehensive reassessment of how the Organization should pursue its responsibilities in that area was needed. Endless operations which seemed to induce in the protagonists an unrealistic reliance on peace-keeping personnel should be discouraged. Resources that could be better used to address the consequences of underdevelopment should not be expended on providing a false sense of security to warring factions, he said.

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Mario Carias Zapata, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Honduras, told the General Assembly yesterday that greater resources should be allocated to funding international legal mechanisms such as the International Court of Justice. That Court had dealt with a border issue between Honduras and El Salvador one year ago, and both States were respecting the ruling so that border populations were living in harmony.

He went on to express concern over recent events in Haiti. The Governors Island Agreement, which called for the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, must be fully implemented within the agreed timetable. Central American States, he said, were working together to foster a new kind of economic, social and cultural integration for the sake of the people of the region. Events in one Central American country impacted the others and required a regional response; therefore, the Governments of the region must strengthen their cooperation.

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Venancio de Moura, Angola's Minister of External Relations, yesterday called for reform of the Security Council so that it could respond to the reality of today's world. Participating in the general debate, he said the enlargement of the Council should provide for the equitable representation of all the regions of the globe. The defence of peace and international security should be the responsibility of all States.

The critical economic and political situation of Angola today was similar to the situations in Somalia, Bosnia, Cambodia or some countries of the former Soviet Union, he said, but the international community seemed insensitive to the tragedy there. Referring to the leader of the opposition National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which was defeated in United Nations-supervised elections last year, he said that a poor loser would not hesitate to defy the international community unless sanctions were applied against him. He called for vigorous international action, so that democracy would not be frustrated in the transition process in Angola.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and President Issaias Afwerki of Eritrea will sign an agreement at Headquarters tomorrow to establish a United Nations Integrated Office in Asmara, Eritrea. The Office will facilitate coordination between United Nations agencies in support of post-conflict nation-building efforts. The Secretary-General will shortly appoint a United Nations Representative who will also serve as the Resident Coordinator in Eritrea.

Since September 1992, United Nations Interim/Integrated Offices have been established eight other offices of this kind. Eritrea, which became independent on 24 May after a referendum monitored and verified by the United Nations, became the 182nd Member of the Organization on 28 May

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The epidemic of optic neuritis which struck over 50,000 people in Cuba earlier this year no longer appears to be spreading, according to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO). The Manager of WHO's Programme for the Prevention of Blindness, Dr. Bjorn Thylefors, said in Geneva today that it was still not known what had caused the outbreak, but it was believed to have been a toxic substance used in daily life. About 1,500 people had suffered severe, permanent loss of vision, he said.

Researchers had concluded that no virus, bacteria or other microorganism was responsible for the epidemic, given that it had not affected the young or people over 65. Dr. Thylefors said that because of economic hardship, average calorie intake in Cuba had fallen sharply over the past four years, increasing vulnerability to disease. Children had not been affected by the epidemic, probably because Cuba's health care system provided them with additional nutrition. In May, the authorities began distributing vitamin B complex tablets to the country's entire population of 11 million.

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